eCourse Outline

Three steps to crafting an effective small business website

1. **Step 1 - Define your business goals for the website.**
   a. Define website functionality
      i. What does my website need to do?
         1. Nice-to-have vs. need-to-have features
         2. How will my business interact with the site?
            a. Staff member access
            b. Required content management features
            c. How often you'll update, and which pieces of content need frequent updates
            d. Expectations w/ regard to ongoing improvements and maintenance
            e. Realistic estimates of time you can devote to the website
      ii. Define metrics for measuring success
         1. How will you measure success/failure?
            a. Online sales goals
            b. Increased email contacts
            c. New client acquisition/website-generated leads
            d. General site engagement
         2. How to use metrics: Test. Track. Change. (Repeat.)
         3. Connect website visitors with key performance indicators
2. **Step 2 - Understand your website visitors.**
   a. Who are your users? (Tech savviness, likely emotional state, general demographic makeup, etc.)
   b. Outline user personas (Personal background, work/role, goals & challenges, how they spend their free time)
   c. Define the appropriate tone and feel for your website.
      i. How can you make visitors feel comfortable?
      ii. What are their goals and questions?
3. **Step 3 – Build a website!**
   a. Choose a technology platform

i. Hosted Platforms – website is a service provided by a company, e.g. Squarespace, WordPress.com, Wix
    1. Pros – No specific technical knowledge needed; security handled by platform provider
    2. Cons - Limited in terms of options & customization; analytics & search engine optimization options are limited
    3. Recommended providers as of 2022: WordPress.com, Squarespace
ii. Self-Hosted Website – website is built by you or a developer on the web server of your choice
    1. Pros
        a. Limitless features, customization opportunities, and design concepts
        b. Easy installation of popular website software (e.g. WordPress)
        c. Dashboard experience similar to WordPress.com or Squarespace
        d. *You own your website and the data you put in it.*
    2. Cons
        a. Responsibility for website security
        b. Higher learning curve
    3. Recommended self-hosted platforms
        a. Absolute top: WordPress (as of 2022)
        b. Other possibilities: Joomla, Drupal, full stack, static HTML, etc.
iii. Website Analytics – Plan for and set up the technologies to implement your analytics and measurement plan.
b. Design & build your website.
    i. Create a sitemap
        1. Make a list of all site pages.
        2. Craft your navigation menu.
        3. For each page, what other pages should users have easy access to?
        4. Are there pages the user should have easy access to sitewide?
    ii. Craft user pathways
    iii. Choose a theme/template
        1. These determine the visual layout and general look-and-feel
        2. Imagine replacing the template's demo content with your own.
        3. Read user reviews.
        4. Be sure the template is mobile responsive.

c. General interface considerations
    i. Eliminate visual clutter.
    ii. Invest in professional photos.
    iii. Keep your typography clean and clear.
    iv. Check your site layout and functionality on a phone, a tablet, a laptop, and a desktop computer.
    v. Ask someone else to navigate your website when you think it's finished.